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January 17, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Minutes of the Special Group (CI) Meeting
2 p.m., Thursday, January 17, 1963

PRESENT: Mr. Johnson, Mr. Bell, General Taylor, Mr. McCone,
Mr. Dungan, Mr. Wilson vice Mr. Murrow, Mr. Bundy vice
Mr. Gilpatric

Mr. Koren and Mr. Wood were present for the meeting.

1. Southeast Asia Status ReportThailand

Mr. Koren reviewed the status report for Southeast Asia with the members, specifically noting the current delay in the negotiations relative to the Special Logistics Action and the VOA megawatt transmitter. Relative to the former, construction is going ahead with the principle question remaining undecided only as to the terminus of the pipeline. The negotiation for a VOA megawatt transmitter in Bangkok for use by the U.S. and Thailand remains at issue. The Thais are reluctant to permit such an overt U.S. facility to operate from their soil for fear of identifying themselves too closely with the U.S. in the eyes of their neighbors.

Mr. Bell who has just returned from a trip to Southeast Asia observed that a major weakness of our CI program for Thailand is that it is still ours, and has not yet been adopted by the Thais. It was noted that although the Thais have been weak on developing programs that they are showing more initiative and understanding in this field. The master force plan for Thailand has been accepted in principle by Sarit, and the details are now being worked out at a lower level.

South Viet-Nam

Mr. Wood in discussing the situation in South Viet-Nam observed that the recent helicopter episode in which three Americans were lost was more serious from the political viewpoint than militarily. Mr. Dungan pointed out, however, that should such episodes be repeated, and coupled at the same time with public criticism from Vietnamese exiles in this country, it could result in difficulties with Congress.

The Group discussed at length the question of relating press coverage in South Viet-Nam to the positive side, as compared to the current predilection for articles critical of the Diem Government, and those which reflect the more adverse circumstances. Mr. Wilson will meet with the public relations officers of the several departments concerned, and try to develop ideas for improving the situation. In the meantime,

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General Wheeler will be notified that he should be prepared for a public appearance when he returns from his present trip, such as discussing the South Viet-Nam situation on "Meet the Press" or some similar television program. It was also agreed that it might be desirable to arrange background briefings for key members of Congress in the hope of heading off adverse reaction to the newspaper articles.

The members, in general, agreed that there has been some improvement in the situation in South Viet-Nam during the last year. However, this has seemingly not affected the ability of the Viet Cong to maintain the size of their forces through local recruitment. It was also noted that it is extremely difficult to obtain significant information on the extent of infiltration of personnel or supplies.

2. Economic Assistance to South Viet-Nam from Third Countries

The Group agreed that progress is being made, but that much more remains to be done. Mr. Bell discussed this subject with Japanese officials during his recent trip, and also with the German Ambassador in South Viet-Nam. The latter suggested that it should be taken up with the German Government from the Washington level. Mr. Bell has asked the President to bring up the subject with the Italian Prime Minister during the latter's visit. It was agreed that the field should develop specific types of assistance needed from third countries, and that Washington would then contact the respective capitals to seek cooperation. State will work with AID and the field on the details, and will then develop a coordinated circular telegram to Chiefs of Mission in the third countries concerned.

3. Emergency Medical Program for South Viet-Nam

The members agreed with an observation by Mr. Bell, that as the AID and DOD memoranda were uncoordinated, and thus did not present an overall picture, a joint briefing memorandum should in the future be prepared for the convenience of the members where two or more departments make reports on the same subject. Mr. Johnson said that his assistant will monitor this, and see that it is done.

4. Civic Action Teams in South Viet-Nam

General Taylor expressed his concern as to whether enough is being done by the South Vietnamese military in the field of civic action. However, it was agreed to hold off the development of a further report on this subject until General Wheeler returns.

Miscellaneous

1. The members discussed the forthcoming progress report for the President, and decided that the Executive Secretary should prepare a short summary report, based on the progress reports from the individual departments and agencies, for the approval of the Group, and its subsequent transmittal to the President.

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2. The Chairman said that following Mr. Martin's review of probable trouble spots in Latin America, it has been decided that the situation in Costa Rica is not such as to require an internal defense plan.

3. The JCS memorandum on the development of a suitable radio for jungle warfare use was noted. It was agreed that although the R & D task is a difficult one, it requires priority effort.

4. The Chairman called the member's attention to Bogota Telegram 538 concerning the need to expedite delivery of equipment; noted that he has circulated a report on the status of an earlier proposal for an expanded worldwide medical civic action program; and stated that the next interdepartmental team visit will be to Ghana and Guinea. The team will be chaired by Mr. Humelsine.

5. It was agreed to discuss the future role of the Special Group (CI) at the next meeting.

James W. Dugan

For

Thomas W. Davis, Jr.
Executive Secretary

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